



Arkansas Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Initiative

Family Support Work Group - August 9, 2005 - 9 - 11 a.m.

Members Present: Deborah Gangluff, Dana Gonzales, Jacqueline Gorton, J. B. Robertson, Sorita Rusher, and Paula C. Watson.

Regrets: Jim Abson, Gwen Paul, Martha Reeder, Kathy Robinson, and Susan Underwood.
The group made self-introductions.

Agenda Item #1: Update on AECCS, SFI, Parent Survey, Tool Kit and Miscellaneous Discussions

Discussion: On Martha's behalf, Jackie provided a short updated related to the AECCS work groups and the Strengthening Families Initiative.

It has been suggested that the Family Support and Parent Education Work Groups have a joint meeting to discuss common concerns. At the next Family Support meeting we might want to combine it with Parent Education. Details will have to be worked out for this to happen.

The biggest amount of information comes with Strengthening Families. Mostly because of geographic distribution, out of the 16 applicants for the Promising Practice Program, the selection committee chose six programs instead of the planned four. All of the six programs, plus the other applicants (SFI Network), were invited to participate on a conference call on August 8. There were about 14 representatives on the call.

Wanda Newell from the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) was included. She talked about some of the resources available from CSSP. On their website, there is a brochure, a slide presentation, and a guidance paper related to the SFI. The website: www.cssp.org/doris_duke/logicModel.html

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Result: One day prior to the Arkansas Early Childhood Association (AECA) Conference on October 12, a pre-conference technical assistance one-day session will be held for all the Promising Practice Programs and the other members of the SFI Network. All persons on the Network were encouraged to register for the conference, bringing their team (3 people)

The provider survey used at the SFI Kick-off was revamped for completion by the parents of children enrolled in the centers. It is much easier now for the parents to complete. Those persons on the conference call agreed to have it completed at the first parent meeting in September or early October and bring the replies to the October meeting.

The information will be tallied using a Scantron and begin to make some decisions about what should be in the toolkit. Some will have it completed at the first parent meeting or at the pre-enrollment meeting.

Question: Will it scan? We hope so. It has the required circles. This will enable us to have an aggregate report. We are hoping to get a good information from the parents.

Agenda Item #1, Continued: Update on AECCS, SFI, Parent Survey, Tool Kit and Miscellaneous Discussions

Discussion: The Network members were asked to begin the self-assessment process. All centers have notebooks that contain the self-assessment. They were asked to look at the self-assessment as a tool to help make improvements in their centers. This will be discussed fully during the next conference call on Monday, September 12.

It may appear to the Network members to be overwhelming at this point, but it will become clearer and easier as the process moves along. We need to make it worth their while to be involved in the network. The six Promising Practice Programs will receive special technical assistance over and above what is provided through the SFI Network.

We are seeking to gather positive stories related to child care centers. If we have some testimonials from parents about the centers, it would be good information. Possibly, we will put it together in a discussion format. We may have it ready for the phone call in October or we may save it and use it for the conference in October.

After the survey is completed, Jackie is hoping to have enough information to be able to make some decisions about the toolkit. The Parent Survey focuses in on how the parents receive information and what they need in a toolkit.

The provider/centers wanted more information on child development. Sorita mentioned that there is going to be some training offered on "Ages and Stages."

Question: Do you think this type of training could be made available for the Promising Practice Programs? Jackie asked that a flyer be sent to her announcing the training.

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The web site link offered for use by Nick Long is still being investigated. Nick is willing to have us put links to various sites on his web site. Review the web site at: www.parenting-ed.org. The link would probably be listed under "Educator Resources" and "Parenting Education Resources."

Sorita's center has gone to a 30-minute meeting at lunch time to get information to the parents. She mentioned that "telephoning" works well if you have the staff to do it. Usually, if they have food they will come. Providers must continue to try to get the interest of the parents.

A discussion followed on computers for child care centers. It was suggested that each center should have at least one computer. There are lots of grants to purchase computers for regular schools. There are probably untapped grant possibilities for early childhood education. Dana agreed to make contact with some foundations related to grants for computers for early childhood education.

Dee Cox at the Department of Education should have a list of the designated person at each school responsible for parent relationships.

The information in the toolkit that is put out first should be generic as possible. Dated materials should be phased in. The six Promising Practice Programs should provide handbook samples, bringing them to the conference in October.

Next Meeting. It was noted that attendance seems to be dwindling and suggested that a September meeting may not be needed unless a meeting is arranged with Parent Education at that time. Jackie will discuss with Martha about the need for a September meeting. **There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.**